



Fact Sheet *IRS Blue Bag Program*

Background and History

The IRS and cooperating prisons monitor inmates' tax-related communications to deter inmate tax fraud. Historically, prisons mailed documents that came to their attention in IRS-supplied blue mailing bags, giving rise to the so-called **Blue Bag program (BBP)**. Today, those bags have given way to other secure mailing media, but the program name remains. More than 950 prisons in 48 states now participate in this expanding program.

Objectives

In recent years, the BBP and other initiatives focused on inmate tax fraud have identified thousands of fraudulent returns and stopped the issuance of thousands of refund checks worth millions of dollars. These are continuing IRS goals. For cooperating prisons, reducing the circulation of illicit funds and unlawful inmate behavior are important objectives.

Blue Bag Procedure

Participating prisons monitor and intercept outgoing and incoming tax-related correspondence. They forward these items to the IRS office in Holtsville, NY for review, along with the inmate's identifying information. The IRS verifies these items for accuracy, within processing guidelines. If IRS validates that a refund check is correct, it is returned to the inmate with IRS Letter 4877. Such checks should not be returned to the IRS.

Inmate Correspondence Requested by the IRS

- Incoming Federal tax refund checks directed to inmates
- Incoming IRS forms and pubs directed to inmates
- Outgoing inmate federal tax returns
- Outgoing inmate mail addressed to IRS
- To discuss other IRS-related communications of potential interest, officials call the hotline at 631-654-6191

Inmate Data Requested with each Mailing

- Full name
- ID number
- Social Security Number
- Date of incarceration
- Release date
- Inmate's name clearly marked on each mailed article

Prison Data Requested with each Mailing

- Prison name and address
- Sending official's name and telephone number

Blue Bag Program Contact Information:

- For additional information, send e-mail to: prisoner_file@irs.gov or call the Blue Bag Hotline at **631-654-6191**. **Refund check verification requests can be faxed to 559-441-5881**

Blue Bag Items should be mailed to:

**Internal Revenue Service
Blue Bag Program, Stop 975
1040 Waverly Avenue
Holtsville, NY 11742**